



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
WATER RESOURCES COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes for October 11, 2001

Members in Attendance

Mark P. Smith	Designee, EOE A
Marilyn Contreas	Designee, DHCD
Richard Thibedeau	Designee, DEM
Cynthia Giles	Designee, DEP
Lee Corte-Real	Designee, DFA
Mark Tisa	Designee, DFWELE
Richard Butler	Public Member
David Rich	Public Member
Bob Zimmerman	Public Member
Joe McGinn	Designee, MDC

Others Attending:

Ruth Alfasso	DPH
Marian Berkowitz	DPH
Vicki Gartland	DEM
Steve Garabedian	USGS
Jackie Murphy	EOEA
Stephen Estes-Smargiassi	MWRA
Lorraine Downey	MWRA
Dave Terry	DEP
Kathy Rich	Public
Michele Drury	DEM
Linda Marler	DEM
Mike Gildesgame	DEM
Arleen O'Donnell	DEP
Anthony Prata	Weston & Sampson
Blake Martin	Weston & Sampson

Agenda Item #1: Executive Director's Report

- Recipients of the grants to be awarded under the new Lakes and Pond Action Strategy grants program will soon be announced. These grants will fund demonstration projects.
- Last month, Gartland, O'Donnell and Smith presented a talk on the stressed basin work being done here at the New England Water Works conference in New Hampshire. The talk was well received. They will also be submitting a paper based on this work to the New England Water Works Association's (NEWWA) journal.

- The WRC lawn guidance & policy will soon be released for public comment.
- Fisheries and Wildlife will be presenting the results of the target fish study conducted on the Ipswich River at a future WRC meeting.

Marler gave the hydrologic conditions report

- The western part of state got a good amount of rainfall last month. Every region is at or near 90% of normal for the water year. The northeast and southeast regions got significantly less than normal precipitation last month, 60-70% of normal. As a result, some of the streamflows in those areas are going down.
- There hasn't been much rainfall in early October, 0.10 inch or less across the state.
- Groundwater levels on Cape Cod have continued to be in the low range. The area of below normal groundwater levels on the Cape has expanded this month.
- Streamflows are rather low, 50% of median for this date. The Parker River is 2% of median.
- Water supply reservoir levels are coming down, but the Quabbin is still within normal ranges. Lynn is approaching a drought watch and will be issuing voluntary watering restrictions, something that is unusual for October. Most suppliers are at the lower end of normal.
- Fire danger levels are increasing, but this is normal for this time of year. Fire danger is listed as moderate. This will probably increase rapidly if we don't get more rain.
- Forecasts are not optimistic for rain. Over the next two weeks we are expecting rain, but not much above 0.10 inch.
- Long-term predictions are for normal or greater than normal wet conditions through December.
- The Weather Service issued a drought water resource statement this week.
- Statewide for the water year, we are at 105% of norm but we are not starting out Water Year 2002 too well.

Agenda Item #2: Request for Additional Information for the Weymouth Landing Area Sewer IBT

Drury acknowledged Weymouth's representatives, then gave an overview of the project. In 1998, the WRC approved the MWRA's Braintree-Weymouth Extension Relief project. The Weymouth town sewers are tributary to that project. A map showing where overflows occurred, both in the MWRA system and town system was distributed. When Staff was reviewing the MWRA's project, one of the issues that arose was the jurisdiction over the overflows in the town system. The Towns of Braintree and Weymouth and the MWRA are all under DEP ACOs to repair their overflows. This project is part of a larger sewer improvement program to repair sewer overflows within Weymouth's system, in order to address the ACO. The Interbasin Transfer Act is triggered by just one area, the Landing Interceptor. The alternatives analysis showed that that best way to address the overflows here was to put an additional interceptor to collect flows from the area. This results in an increase in the size of the connection to the MWRA.

WRC Staff, along with the other environmental agencies, have reviewed their application to make sure that all the information required to conduct our review under the Act has been provided. The application was part of an expanded ENF; they will be doing a single EIR. Staff comments to the Secretary on the expanded ENF are incorporated into this memo requesting additional information. In addition, Staff reviewed all comments received on the ENF and have

incorporated a few of DEP's comments, relevant to the IBT process, in today's request for additional information. Staff are asking clarification of some of the statements and for some additional information to address the performance standards.

Weymouth's water supply is obtained from the Weymouth/Weir river basin and used mostly in this basin. Because the town is sewerred to Massachusetts Coastal Basin via the MWRA, water crosses a town line and basin line and is lost to the Weymouth/Weir basin.

Zimmerman stated that this IBT was to transfer storm water and ground water that was leaking into the sewer pipes and that Weymouth also had a drinking water problem. Drury replied that they are required under the ACO to address I/I problems and Staff will be looking at that issue as well during the project review, but we are not at that point yet. This presentation is to request the additional information we need to get to that point. Smith stated that we regulate the increase in capacity and they are increasing the capacity of their wastewater system. The performance standards deal with I/I.

Zimmerman stated that we are focused on the pipe. We should focus on getting water back in the ground. "They're running out of water ... in Weymouth because they have completely destroyed the system. They are letting all of this water run out of town. By increasing the capacity of their ability to send more water out of town, they are actually enhancing their problems." Smith stated we will review this under the Act. Drury reiterated that we are asking for more information on their I/I program. We have not made any technical judgements on this project yet. This increase will only be used during peak wet weather flows (the 1-year, 6-hour storm).

Zimmerman stated that the idea is to capture water to enhance water supply storage. Why is DEP requiring an end-of-the-pipe solution? Why can't we require Weymouth to think about this on a more global scale. Prata, representing Weymouth, stated that the town is in midst of comprehensive I/I reduction program. They are also doing quite a bit of work with water conservation. Part of this program is to reduce the amount of I/I by over 1.5 mgd system-wide. We have been asked by your staff to outline this program under the this IBT request. Zimmerman suggested that it would be money better spent if the MWRA spent money on something that would capture storm water and put it in the ground, rather than building bigger pipes.

Drury stated that Weymouth is required to produce an EIR on this project, so there will be an opportunity to comment on this issue. They have been looking at alternatives and they are required to conduct a Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan. This is just one part of an entire Weymouth sewer improvement project. Staff is asking them to address 27 IBT-related questions in the EIR. About one-third are for clarification. The others ask for additional information so we can better evaluate the project against performance standards. Staff expects that these questions will be addressed in the EIR. Once all the information is received, either from the EIR or through our own process, the Commission will have 60 days to hold public hearings. A staff recommendation will be presented to the Commission. This will then go out to public hearing. Then the WRC will have 60 days to make a decision on this project.

Tisa asked if Zimmerman's concerns would be addressed in the required alternatives analysis. Zimmerman offered to help the town look at something other than increasing pipes. Tisa asked if this was something that is being considered. Prata responded that the town looked at several alternatives. What's driving this is that there is already a pipe to the MWRA. It is being moved to take advantage of better hydraulics of the site. The Landing Area is 98% developed, so even though the size increases, it is not expected that flows will greatly increase.

Smith suggested that the Town's consultants report back to the town and suggested that a meeting to look at the issues be set up with Zimmerman, the Town and DEP. Zimmerman requested soils maps and Zone II maps. Martin, representing Weymouth, stated that many of the concerns raised here would be addressed in the Local Water Resources Management Plan required under the Interbasin Transfer Act.

Drury stated that there were five different pieces of this town-wide sewerage effort, but the others do not involve interbasin transfer. They will look at I/I removal, better pipe alignment etc. She also reminded the Commission that when the MWRA's Braintree-Weymouth project was under review, the MWRA stated that even if they took out all the I/I in the system, they still would need to increase pipe capacity to prevent overflows.

Agenda Item #3: Public safety and the security of our drinking water sources

Smith stated that this had become an important issue since September 11th. He showed a video, produced by a Boston PBS station, concerning water supply safety issues. He stated that John Sullivan, Chief Engineer of Boston and Water and Sewer recently testified on this topic before Congress and distributed copies of Sullivan's testimony. Smith also distributed an article from AWWA on this topic and mentioned that DEP has Emergency Response Guidance for Water Suppliers. DEP was in the process of updating this guidance, adding references to acts of terrorism. This was fast-tracked after 9/11.

Video: MWRA has banned flights over the reservoir and is on full alert. It has received no threats of attacks on the water supply. The sheer size of the reservoir makes contamination unlikely. The focus is on increasing surveillance.

Terry discussed the DEP Emergency Response Guidance. DEP has been getting a lot of calls from frightened citizens and has been spending time reassuring them that there are mechanisms in place to maintain the safety of the water supply. We have been working with a number of national task forces to address these issues. DEP has been working with EPA and NEWWA to put on symposia, New England-wide, on security issues. DEP is contacting water suppliers to get an update on their interconnections. Mainly DEP is trying to keep water supply operators focused on their jobs and make sure that there is redundancy in their systems. These new security concerns raise policy concerns, especially with recent initiatives to open reservoir lands to passive recreation. Also we need to ask where we spend our limited money; do we continue with our programs or use the money put up security cameras, etc.?

Estes-Smargiassi stated that the purpose of terrorism is to decrease public confidence in public infrastructure. MWRA is spending a lot of time building people's confidence in the system. The kinds of threats we anticipate are direct sabotage and chemical and biological contamination.

MWRA is monitoring these threats and responding when necessary. We are clamping down on access. The Quabbin Reservation is completely off-limits; the visitor's center is closed. Public access at Wachusett has been limited. All critical facilities are secure (State Police have been posted and, in some cases, National Guard). There are more patrols of watershed lands and we are looking for vegetative changes, fish kills (signs of contamination), tracks to the water, etc. Routine monitoring is being conducted more carefully.

Right now MWRA is trying to set up a response protocol. If there is a valid contamination event, how quickly can we shut down the system? How and when does the system get turned back on? The first concern is public safety: sanitation and fire protection. After that comes drinking water. MWRA has been working with the City of Boston Health Commission and DPH on a number of issues focussed on water system performance and educating the public health community on how the system works. We are looking at the types of illnesses that are showing up at emergency rooms to make sure that it is within the expected parameters for that type of illness at the particular time of the year (i.e. no unusual illnesses showing up that may signal that something outside the ordinary is going on). This will help identify potential contamination problems early and lead to better public health response. Things that we have been doing recently as good water supply practices have increased our security readiness: eliminating open reservoirs and ozone treatment (this supplements the ability to chlorinate and provides two types of disinfection and is more effective against some chemical and many biological contaminants). The Metro-west tunnel will provide redundancy to the Hultman Aqueduct. The Authority has met with its member communities to discuss the response plans. MWRA staff will be giving our Board a confidential briefing and will be putting a weekly update on security on our website.

Berkowitz stated that DPH is trying to develop a multi-component surveillance system to track symptoms through the health care system. An Emergency Response Coordinator was just hired. Facts sheets on bioterrorism are available on the DPH website. Rich stated that the biggest concern he's heard is that we have to stop the general public from panicking. It is not highly likely that a water supply will be contaminated. We have to let the public know that everything that can be done is being done. The most important thing we can do is to calm the public on this issue.

Corte-Real stated that there are no crop dusters in the state. There are very few licensed pesticide applicators in the state and they can apply pesticides in liquid form only. It is difficult to deliver these formulations over a wide area. Garabedian raised concerns about access to water resources information. USGS has been asked to remove information from data bases and remove reports that contain precise information on water supply intakes. We will probably see a policy which restricts free and easy access to precise sensitive water resource information. Water supplies face more threats from unintentional impacts (spills, breaks, environmental conditions). This is a good time to let the public know that water supplies need to be protected from both intentional and unintentional threats.

Meeting adjourned.

Minutes approved 8/14/03